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SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN UPDATE FROM NDJAMENA
REGIONAL REFUGEE COORDINATOR, APRIL 15, 2009

REF: EMAIL NDJAMENA REFUGEE COORDINATOR
WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT, 4-14-09

¶1. (U) This cable constitutes one of a series of weekly updates on the humanitarian situation among Darfur refugees in Chad and Chadian IDPs.

MINURCAT TAKES ON
RESPONSIBILITY FOR
HUMANITARIAN
SECURITY IN EASTERN
CHAD

¶2. (U) Ndjamena-based Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord), RSO and Accra-based RefCoord met with UN Department of Safety and Security (DSS) Chief Security Advisor Bertrand Bourgain to ensure that USG refugee resettlement NGO, the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) is officially registered within the UN/MINURCAT security framework. RefCoords also met with OCHA Head of Office Eliane Duthoit April 14 to file the necessary paperwork for OPE staff, who will be in eastern Chad in May to process Darfuri refugees for possible resettlement to the U.S., to be placed on the UN evacuation roster.

¶3. (U) RefCoord and Accra-based RefCoord attended the latest MINURCAT security briefing for humanitarians April 7, where discussion focused on persistent rumors of rebel activity in the East and NGO concerns about lack of adequate information sharing. DSS representatives cautioned participants to remain vigilant but said Chadian rebels across the border still seemed too divided to make any effective attack into Chad. MINURCAT Force Commander General Kandji and UNPOL Deputy Commandant Fredrik Bjerkeborn admitted some delays in the transition period between EUFOR's departure and MINURCAT's complete installation. They asked humanitarians to have patience as new peacekeepers fully deployed to the field. In particular, Bourgain said DSS and MINURCAT were working to harmonize communications systems in the field so that all humanitarian actors would have immediate access to security information. Bourgain confirmed MINURCAT's ultimate responsibility to evacuate all international humanitarian staff in eastern Chad in the event of a crisis and the UN's adherence to the "Saving Lives Together" concept. However, he noted some constraints on MINURCAT's ability to conduct an evacuation, including limited fuel, airplanes and supplies.

¶4. (U) Humanitarians at the meeting were particularly concerned about several recent incidents perpetrated by DIS personnel. (DIS is the special Chadian police force trained and mentored by MINURCAT UNPOL and charged with protecting refugee and IDP camps as well as providing escorts to humanitarians.) Several organizations questioned whether incidents of DIS violence amounted to a worrying pattern on the part of the DIS and asked what disciplinary action would be taken against individual perpetrators. UNPOL reminded participants that it had no authority to discipline the Chadian police force, but promised to continue to work with local authorities to ensure they take appropriate punitive action. [Note: The UN has told us in separate

meetings that it is working with the DIS commander to develop a plan of corrective steps that it recommends in cases where DIS exceed the bounds of their authority or commit crimes while off duty. Ambassador will raise this issue with SRSG Angelo April 15 for an authoritative update from the MINURCAT chief. End note]

15. (U) Participants also discussed the temporary freeze on UNHAS flights two weeks ago due to a sudden decision by the French military to reduce fuel supplies. Although that particular problem was quickly resolved through advocacy by the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator, the underlying inadequacy of fuel supplies remains an issue. The UNHAS Director explained to humanitarians that all air services operating in eastern Chad are supplied with fuel through the French military base in Abeche, which receives its fuel from TOTAL Marketing and Libya Oil. This fuel supply has been reduced due to problems at the refinery in Cameroon, Chadian customs delays, and transporter strikes. Meeting participants expressed concern that this fuel shortage will have a direct and significant impact on humanitarian air service and ultimately their ability to deliver assistance in eastern Chad or to be evacuated in the event of a security crisis. RefCoord will continue to monitor the situation and work with other donors and partners to pursue solutions to this shortage.

NGO UPDATES

16. (U) RefCoord introduced three representatives from the NGO 24 Hours for Darfur (24HFD) to UNHCR Deputy Representative for Protection Michele Manca DiNissa April 9. 24HFD has received funding from the Department of State and from the National Endowment for Democracy to interview a representative sample of Darfuri refugees regarding their views on peace, reconciliation and return. The organization requested UNHCR facilitate the implementation of the project by providing a letter of introduction and demographic data on the camps. DiNissa expressed concerns about possible politicization of the camps and conflict resulting from this type of project. He said UNHCR was mandated to avoid the appearance of any political bias and would prefer not to be publicly linked with the project. RefCoord noted USG support for the project's goal of including refugee voices in any Darfur political solutions, but emphasized that PRM implementing partners and recipients of PRM funding were not obliged to provide support to 24HFD.

17. (U) RefCoord met with Olivia Collins, the Country Director of French-based NGO Groupe Urgence Rehabilitation Developpement (URD) April 9. Collins described the organization as a research, evaluation, and training institute focused on improving the quality of humanitarian operations. ECHO funded URD in 2008 to complete an assessment of the humanitarian situation in eastern Chad. The organization has just begun a follow-on program designed to promote the development and adoption of best practices in four sectors; water and sanitation, food security, environmental impact, and protection. Project methodology is to bring subject-area technical experts to the field for workshops involving as many partners as possible. The final evaluation in September should show progress in terms of changed practices including better coordination and information sharing between actors. URD plans to establish a long-term presence in Chad and may seek funding for future similar programs.

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